A Freehand Talk about the STAGE and STAGE FOLK

by MATTHEW WHITE JR.

Arnold Daly, a Former Office Boy for Frohman, Makes a Hit With "Candida" at the Princess—His Versatility Little Short of Wonderful. Shaw, the Author, One of the Oddest Characters in Gotham.

New York, Dec. 19.

WHAT Richard Mansfield balked at, Arnold Daly, not so very long ago office boy in the establishment of Charles Frohman, has accomplished. He has given the first American performance of George Bernard Shaw's remarkable play, "Candida." The affair took place at a special matinee in the Princess Theater, and I do not hesitate to say that those who were present may congratulate themselves for other things than the mere enjoyment they derived from the performance, great as this was. Young Daly is liable to amount to much one of these days.

I remember him first as the boy who had to laugh so uproariously in "Because She Loved Him So" when that comedy was first brought out in '99 at the Madison Square. From office work at Frohman's he had gone to the Lyceum as call boy, and so drifted onto the stage himself.

His first part was Hummingtop, in a repertoire theater's production of "The Arabian Nights," with which troupe he also played Treenwayes, Gottschalk's part in "The Amazons." He was the boy Chambers in "Pudd'nhead Wilson," and it is a pity that Frank Mayo could not have lived to see his prophecies as to the boy's future in a fair way of being fulfilled.

Daly's Versatility.

The versatility of the fellow is something remarkable. He was a most realistic mad lover with Julia Marlowe in "Barbara Fretchie," but equally true to the sane devilries of the bad brother last winter in "The Bird in the Cage." Again, two years ago, the London critics praised his Imp in "When We Were Twenty-one," and a few weeks ago he was just as much at home as the faithful servant to Major Andre.

Now we have him showing a rare aptitude for that long locked, altogether remarkable youth with a sage's brain—the Eugene Marchbanks of "Candida." And he has just started in as the music master in that frothy trifle, "A Girl From Dixie."

Would "Candida" prove a success in the regular bill? The critics appear to be divided in their opinions on this point, although I should say that the preponderance of the comments are adverse to the attempt. But it seems a shame that there is not a big enough public in New York to support for a run a drama that combines in its three acts comedy, philosophy, and theology, with a hint at tragedy on the side.

The three times a week "Candida" to be given in the afternoons at the Madison Square is but a compromise.

Miss Donnelly's Candida.

The Candida was Dorothy Donnelly, one time leading woman in the Murray Hill stock, and more latterly in the support of Robert Edeson in "Soldiers of Fortune." She was in the main excellent in a part that must have been exceedingly difficult, as at times it had the appearance of inconsistency. But so subtle is Shaw that one can never be quite sure of his ultimate meanings until a comprehensive viewpoint of the whole is gained from which to make one's estimates.

The entire cast of six people was most efficient, and yet the most of them were without metropolitan reputations.

"But do you notice," said my companion at the play, "that they all speak in the Shaw tongue?"

Of course, this was not the fault of the players, but of the dramatist, who could not resist endowing every one of his creatures with shafts of wit or satire equally keen pointed.

George Bernard Shaw.

George Bernard Shaw is one of the oddest characters in the literary world. He somewhat resembles the title of one of his own plays—"You Never Can Tell"—where he will break out next. He is a vegetarian, and his advice for journalists is: "Spare no labor to find out the right thing to say, and then say it with the most exasperating levity, as if it were the first thing that would come into any fool's head."

He has had two plays in the regular bill in this country—both presented by Mansfield—one "Arms and the Man," an artistic treat to the select few, but which proved caviare to the multitude, and "The Devil's Disciple," the satire of which was so carefully wrapped up in dramatic action that the masses swallowed it without realizing that a popular success was really a play to make one think and gasp.

"Our New Minister,' the rural drama now on review at the American, has rather a singular history. Those who find a strong resemblance in it to Clyde Fitch's "Lovers' Lane" need to be told that "Our New Minister" was written twelve years ago and has been trying to break into New York ever since. Its failure to do this was indirectly the cause of death to one of its authors, George W. Ryer, who collaborated on the piece with Denman Thompson, as they did on "The Old Homestead," in which Thompson is still playing.

But Ryer seems to have been the target for ill luck in connection with all his plays. "The Old Homestead" never paid until he sold out his interest in it, and it was the same with "Our New Minister," in which the clergyman is enacted by Ernest Hastings, who made an equally admirable "reverend" in "Lovers' Lane."

"Our New Minister" is written on strictly legitimate lines. That is to say, there are no "features" in it—neither chickens, a pump, a quartet, nor a snowstorm. The nearest approach to this sort of thing is the role of Skeezicks, a Billy Baxter lad from New York. The part was written for John P. Brawn, who has almost as odd a history as the play. He has been on the stage fourteen years, and in that time has played in only three productions.

He began as the whistling waiter in "A Trip to Chinatown," and then created the whistling bootblack in Denman Thompson's "Two Sisters," at Niblo's Garden.

Brawn's Good Work.

In "Our New Minister" he is a source of perennial delight to the audience, and gets a reception each time he appears that must delight his soul. The part is in sharp contrast to all the others. Almost every word he speaks belongs in a dictionary of slang, and yet he takes pains to keep the role out of the tough category, which gives it a distinction all its own.

David Belasco has gone and done it again—swept the town with another triumph. In "Sweet Kitty Bellairs" he has what I should call a bigger winner than either "Zaza" or "Du Barry," because the play, being comedy, will appeal to a wider class. The mounting, too, is more picturesque throughout, although perhaps lacking in one or two particular effects that made "Du Barry" the marvel of its day.

In Henrietta Crosman Belasco has found a star who will twinkle every bit as brilliantly as any of the three now under his control. And for Miss Crosman herself, what a contrast in the two rainy nights which must be marked with white stones in her memory, one of them that October Tuesday in 1901 when she opened at the Bijou as a stopgap after a failure and played "Mistress Nell" to box office receipts of $69, and the other that December Wednesday of two weeks ago when she was part and parcel of another Belasco ten-strike.

Henrietta Crosman's Role.

Aside from the success she has made with Kitty Bellairs, Miss Crosman should thoroughly enjoy the role, jostled as it is on all sides with regimental accessories, for she comes of army people herself. She was born at Wheeling, W. Va., where her father, Major George H. Crosman, was stationed at the time. Maj. Gen. George H. Crosman was her grandfather, and her uncle, who graduated from Annapolis in the class with Admiral Dewey, was a commander in the navy. Another of her uncles gave up his life in the civil war.

She secured her first position on the stage through John W. Ellsler, who died not long since, and it wasn't long before she was playing leads with Robert Downing's company. After that she passed into the stock at Daly's and acted Celia to the Rosalind of Ada Rehan in "As You Like It." She was also a member of that other famous stock—the one at the Lyceum—and played second to Georgia Cayvan in its first play, "The Wife," written by David Belasco and Henry C. DeMille.

One of Wilkinson's Widows.

After that she was one of the two widows in "Mr. Wilkinson's Widows," one of Charles Frohman's early comedy hits, Louise Thorndike Boucicault being the other, and then made a big success as Gloriana, which she only played a few nights, however, owing to illness. After her recovery she appeared in the West for a number of years and New York had quite forgotten her when she came in on rubbers, as the saying is, for "Mistress Nell," its author and the star, were all equally unknown until the next morning, when such a chorus of praise went up as landed Henrietta Crosman at once among the limited list of stars who are made by the public's opinion of their work, and not by a manager's whims or an "angel's" pocketbook.

She played "Mistress Nell" at three theaters that winter—the Bijou, the Savoy, and Wallack's—and two years later made another success at the Republic (now the Belasco), in "As You Like It." Last season she was at Wallack's in "The Sword of the King."

The leading man in "Sweet Kitty Bellairs," Charles Hammond, is a stranger to New York audiences, Mr. Belasco having imported him from Australia. His part is a difficult one to do, but he acquits himself of it with such intelligence that I prophesy he will soon be taken to the hearts of our playgoers and made to feel at home.

As to Edwin Stevens.

Most of the plaudits for the men went to Edwin Stevens, who has a drunken scene which he manages with more than ordinary adroitness. Stevens is a versatile actor with a vengeance. Last winter he was the Bey of Ballyhoo in "Nancy Brown," with Marie Cahill; previously he had done the chief role in the little tragedy from the French, "At the Telephone." Before that he served as the Emperor at the Casino, in "A Chinese Honeymoon."

A few years ago he was the villain with the peculiarly shaped hand at the Empire in "Brother Officers;" after that he became the ballet master for Ethel Barrymore in "Captain Jinks," and later was Baron Stein in the Empire's revival of "Diplomacy."

Mr. Stevens has a strong affection for San Francisco, and last spring, after quitting "Nancy Brown," he went out there again and resumed his old role of Wang at the Tivoli.

Katherine Florence.

Next to Miss Crosman's, the prominent female role is that of the tearful Lady Standish, played with admirable art by Katherine Florence (wife of Fritz Williams), who has not been seen in town before since she was with Crane in "David Harum." Miss Florence was one of the favorite members of the old Lyceum stock, and is the daughter of Katherine Rogers, who used to be in the Wallack troupe.

She was born in England, but came here when a child. In the Empire's first play, "The Girl I Left Behind Me," by David Belasco and Franklyn Fyles (dramatic critic for the "Mail and Express"), she was the Indian maiden, Fawn Afraid. Her first appearance was made with Mrs. Langtry's company in 1889 as Beatrice Vyse, in "As in a Looking Glass." When the Lyceum troupe gave Pinero's famous comedy of girls in men's attire, "The Amazons," Miss Florence was the one whom the clothes most perturbed, Lady Wilhelmina.

Imported From England.

In order to secure the correct thing in dowagers for the part of Lady Mary Prideaux, the hero's aunt, Mr. Belasco lured Louise Moodie from England. She will be remembered as the prudish old lady with John Hare in "The Gay Lord Quex," and in 1884 acted as leading woman to Lester Wallack for a month while Rose Coghlan and Osmonde Tearle were on tour.

Opposite Wallack himself, she played Susanne in "A Scrap of Paper" (which certainly ought to bear reviving in a threadbare season like this) and Kate Oldcastle, in "She Stoops to Conquer."

Edith Crane, the "villainess," was, if I mistake not, the third Trilby playing the part on the Pacific Coast soon after Virginia Harned and Blanche Walsh did it in the East. Later she supported Maurice Barrymore and in '98 married Tyrone Power, who was such an admirable Judas last season and made such a poor Ulysses the present one.

John E. Kellerd, the recreant yet jealous husband, originated the villain, Colonel Thorpe, in that other Belasco play, "The Heart of Maryland." He was born in London, and his first appearance in this country was made with the famous Boston Museum stock in 1883, as MacToddy, in "The Guv'nor." He essayed to star a season or two since, but wisely gave over the attempt.

Good vehicles for stars are as scarce as hen's teeth; good parts in the support of other stars are much more easily come by, and are more satisfactory in the long run both to the public and the player.

How easy it is for a good actor to be floored by a poor play was demonstrated a week or so ago by Robert Mantell's experience with "The Light of Other Days."

By the way, the word "light" has been a hoodoo of the most pronounced type this season. There was "The Light that Failed," "The Lights of Home," and then "The Lights of Other Days"—all of them positively refusing to twinkle to any degree of brilliancy in the way of box office receipts. "The Light of Other Days" was even more feeble in its flickerings than "The Lights of Home," tested at the same theater, the Fourteenth Street. Poor Mantell! He came into New York thus handicapped for the first time in many years, having been barred out by a matter of alimony, I believe.

When Fanny Davenport first brought out "Fedora" she had Mantell for Louis Ipanhoff. He carried everything before him, became the talk of the town, and a matinee idol of the first water. In fact, Miss Davenport soon decided that she could dispense with the services of a fellow-actor who attracted so much attention, and presently he was appearing in a dramatization of "Called Back."

He was also in the cast of the Steele Mackaye play, "Dakolar," which opened the old Lyceum, and did little more. Then he went back to Miss Davenport, and after that became a star under the management of Augustus Pitou.

Played Juvenile With Modjeska.

His first vehicle was "Tangled Lives," then came "The Marble Heart" (who would dare venture out in a piece of that name in these days of slang?), and finally "Monbars," which he clung to for years. His full name is Robert Bruce Mantell, and he was born in Scotland in 1854. He was brought up in Ireland, and his first part, when he was twenty, was the sergeant in "Arrah-na-Pogue," which he acted in Lancashire, England. He came to this country in 1878 and played juvenile parts in Mme. Modjeska's company.

At Weber & Fields'.

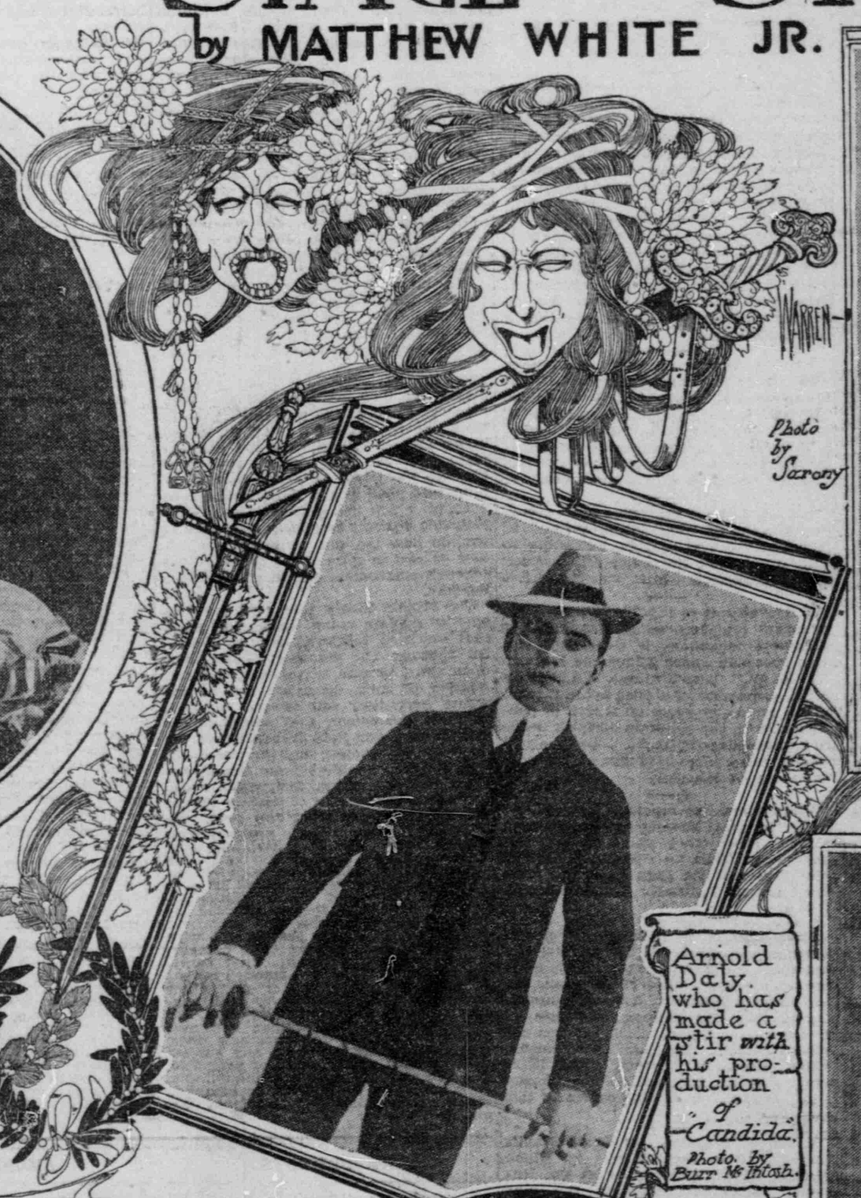
Weber & Fields were late this season in adding a new burlesque to their show. They have declared in print that there was nothing worth travestying until "Raffles" came along. Their "Waffles" is perhaps the most legitimate thing of the sort they have done. Certainly it is admirably acted.

Lew Fields shows himself capable of work in almost any line by his cleverness as Croshay, the "honest, hard-working burglar," and the modesty of Weber in assigning himself to the tiny role of the French maid is typical of the good business instincts which have made this little music hall perhaps the most profitable theatrical venture in the city.

"Not what part will give me the most prominence, but where can I fit in to the best advantage of the whole?" This has been the motto of Messrs. Weber & Fields from the outset, when they caught on with "The Geezer."

In "Waffles" Louis Mann carries off the honors with his imitation of E. M. Holland's detective, although Pete Dailey runs him hard for first place as Raffles himself. In looks he is almost the duplicate, slightly enlarged, of Kyrle Bellew.

Dorothy Donnelly who was "Candida" in the George Bernard Shaw Play
Photo by Newman



Arnold Daly who has made a stir with his production of "Candida."
Photo by Burr McIntosh.

Lew M Fields who is Crosby, the Burglar in "Waffles"

Joe Weber who is the French Maid in "Waffles"

Jno P Brawn who is Skeesicks in "Our New Minister"
Photo by Sarony

Katherine Florence, who has an important part in "Sweet Kitty Bellairs"
Photo by Sarony

Henrietta Crosman the Star in "Sweet Kitty Bellairs"
Photo Baker's Art Gallery

Ernest Hastings and Grace Hanson in "Our New Minister"
Photo by Hall